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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

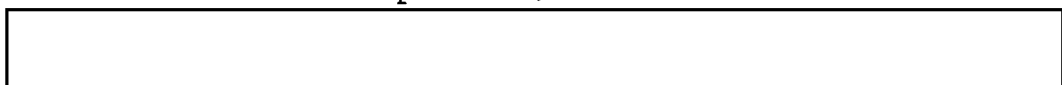
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USSR-Portugal

Soviet Ambassador to Portugal Arnold Kalinin went out of his way at a luncheon yesterday to tell Ambassador Carlucci that the USSR was more interested in CSCE and relations with the US than in Portugal. He expressed the hope that the US and USSR could "work closely and cooperatively on avoiding any confrontation" in Portugal. Kalinin also asserted that the initiative for Soviet bunkering facilities in Madeira last year originated with a trading company and that the embassy had not been involved.

Kalinin is a polished diplomat, and his statements to Ambassador Carlucci are probably representative of the kind of reassuring generalities that he is under instructions to give Western diplomats in Lisbon.

The Soviets, who for the most part are pleased by developments in Portugal, not surprisingly have been reluctant to give any commitment that they will:

--refrain from aggravating the Portuguese situation;

--refrain from taking advantage of Western woes to strengthen their position in the country;

--keep the Portuguese Communists from making a bid for power.

Kalinin's distinction between the trading company and the embassy is transparent, since in either case an agency of the Soviet government was involved. [REDACTED]

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Yugoslav Foreign Minister
To Visit Egypt and Syria

Foreign Minister Minic today starts a six-day mission to Egypt and Syria. He will presumably sound out Arab views on the Geneva talks, in which Yugoslavia may play a role, if Sadat's proposals for expanding participation are accepted.

A recent Yugoslav press commentary described Sadat's suggestion that Yugoslavia, India, the UK, and France join the talks as a "wise and statesman-like move." Although the commentator welcomed the prospects for Belgrade's participation, he appeared uncertain about his country's exact role. He did, however, imply that a wider representation from the nonaligned movement in Geneva could hinder the ability of the great powers to divide the Arabs and to pursue solutions that could be contrary to the interests of the principals.

Yugoslavia's unstinting support of the Arab cause, of course, leaves Belgrade open to charges of undue bias. To counter such challenges, the press has muted its anti-Israeli propaganda somewhat and has amplified the line that the equal rights and independence of all Middle East countries--including Israel--must be respected.

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Another Go-Round on the
European Party Conference

The commission charged with preparing a final communique for the European Communist Conference will soon hold its second session in East Berlin, according to a Yugoslav diplomat stationed there. He also said that the delay in reaching an agreement on a draft text is embarrassing to the East German hosts--and by implication, to the Soviets.

The first session of the commission, which was held in East Berlin from February 17 to 19, issued only a terse notice that billed the meeting as a "full and constructive exchange of opinions." This formulation implied that the participants failed to reach agreement.

The major problem appears to be Moscow's interest in having the conference also issue a binding ideological document. The Yugoslav, Romanian, and Italian parties oppose such a document because Moscow could use it to reassert its dominance in the movement and to increase conformity. [redacted]

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[redacted] this opposition has led to the scrapping of plans to issue an ideological document. Moscow may still attempt to insert controversial language in the final communique. If it succeeds, Belgrade has made clear that it will not participate. Bucharest may join the Yugoslavs in boycotting the formal European conference; the Romanians established a precedent for such a step in April, 1967, when they refused to attend a similar meeting at Karlovy Vary. [redacted]

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Albania: The Purge Goes On

The purge that began with the ouster of defense minister Balluku last summer has now been extended to the local level. According to an authoritative Albanian newspaper, a sweeping reorganization, personnel cut, and streamlining of the Tirana government apparatus was proposed by the city executive committee last week.

Since the ouster of Balluku, the Hoxha regime has been calling for a grass-roots effort to weed out "bureaucratic superfluosness and inefficiencies." This is the first known response to that initiative.

If the newspaper account is correct, the number of deputy chairmen on the executive committee will be reduced from eight to six. The city's administrative divisions will be reduced from ten to six, and all other sections of the city bureaucracy are also expected to be hit by drastic personnel cut-backs. The agricultural section was specifically criticized for a number of shortcomings, including featherbedding.

Hoxha and company seem intent on using the momentum generated by the Balluku ouster and subsequent purges of several high-level officials to attack a variety of shortcomings throughout the party/state apparatus. The regime, however, may be meeting some resistance; there are indications that the Tirana meeting produced some fireworks. The newspaper reported that the problems were "thrashed out"--an unusually open admission of disagreements for the Albanians to make.

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